DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 862 JC 770 201

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TITLE Enrollment Profile and Grade Analysis for 1974-75 Freshmen Class.
INSTITUTION Essex County Coll., Newark, N.J.
PUB DATE Jan 77
NOTE 19p.; For a related document see JC 770 183

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Academic Failure; *Black Students; Cohort Analysis; Community Colleges; *Grades (Scholastic); Institutional Research; *Junior Colleges; Junior College Students; *Student Characteristics; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS New Jersey

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to evaluate the performance after one academic year of new students at Essex County College, an urban institution with a predominantly black student body. The population for the study was the fall 1974 freshman class. General findings of the study included: (1) 72.4% of the students registered for 12 or more credits; (2) the male-female ratio remained approximately the same after one year of college (38% male to 62% female); (3) no significant difference was found between the number of credits attempted and the credits completed in the fall and winter semesters; (4) more A's were earned in the fall than in the winter; (5) incomplete grades were approximately the same for all departments for both semesters; and (6) students in all departments withdrew more frequently in the winter than they did in the fall. Overall, the failure rate for the population appeared to confirm the incongruity between high motivation and low academic performance since the data showed that most grades were concentrated at the extremes. It was recommended in light of this finding that some discussion of academic standards might be appropriate, in terms of the amount and extent of refinement of the behavior change demanded of students. (JDS)

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ENROLLMENT PROFILE AND GRADE ANALYSIS

FOR

1974-75 FRESHMEN CLASS

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January, 1977

JC 770 201

INTRODUCTION

The development of the two-year college has brought with it efforts to both evaluate its effect on students and to preserve its uniqueness. A general finding of research on student characteristics suggests that two-year college students are different from their university counterpart in identifiable ways. For example, Tillery (1964) compared university-eligible students in California who entered community colleges with those who entered state universities, and he found that community college students were less mature, less intellectually oriented and more authority-oriented than the university student. Richards and Braskamp (1967), Maynard (1975) and others have reported similar differences and concluded that student characteristics covary in certain ways with the characteristics of the college environment.

Most community colleges recognize such differences: they point to differences in philosophy and program that are designed to meet individual and group needs of their students. Many of the studies undertaken to measure the interaction between the college environment and student performance use standardized instruments, some limit their

investigations to measuring "environmental press"; and fewer still combine measures of both academic and personality attributes as a means of assessing the student/environment relationship.

As a first step, two-year colleges have assumed that the institution's environment is a product of the following attributes: the total number of students in the college, the average intelligence of the students, the location of the institution and the character of its boundaries, the composition of its faculty and the personal characteristics of its student body as estimated by a typology of eight types. These eight variables are assumed to encompass an extensive range of attributes including personality, interests, values, originality, self-concept, parental background, goals and aptitudes. Using this model, we should be able to study the interactions of students and the college in terms of a variety of educational outcomes. The outcome of interest here is performance.

Since the initiation of the New Student Characteristics Report, it has become apparent that just describing the entering population of freshmen according to general categories is not enough: We need to know what majors were chosen upon entry and if any change occurred, what classes the students registered for and how well they performed in them, the attrition rate for that population after one semester, the number of credits attempted and completed by semester, grade point average earned by semester and grades earned by department by semester.

The purpose of this study, then, was to evaluate new student performance after one academic year in Essex County College. We chose to concentrate on the variables listed in the previous paragraph because

it was felt that they offered the most accurate assessment of performance given the existing data base.

The Study

The population for this study was the 1974 fall freshman class represented in the 1974-75 Student Characteristics Report. It is a report of student progress after one year in the college that attempts to answer some of the questions generated by the first report. Specifically, the following implications from that report are considered:

1. Students are highly motivated but lack the skills to achieve at a level comparable to their motivation.
2. Establish goals and objectives to facilitate academic research and assessment on an institutional basis and expand research activities on student characteristics.
3. What we accept as success may be the perpetuation of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 show that almost twice as many students completed credits in the lower range (1-6.5) than initially registered for that number. Approximately 1/3 of the students who attempted 13-15.5 credits actually completed that number for the fall semester, but the winter semester shows that more than 1/2 did not complete credits within that range. The results would seem to suggest that students attempted fewer credits in the winter; and, though there is no way of verifying it from the data, a reasonable assumption to make is that the choice of fewer credits for the winter is related to the student's experience

with a larger credit load for their first semester in the college.

An actual credit count shows that 23,839.7 credits were attempted for the fall semester compared to 18,939.8 credits completed for a difference of -4,899.9. For the winter semester, the figures are 22,487.8 attempted and 13,428.08 completed for a difference of -9,059.7 credits.

TABLE 1

CREDITS FOR FALL '74

No. Credits	Attempted No.	Attempted %	Completed No.	Completed %
1-3.5	75	3.8	128	6.5
4-6.5	150	7.7	255	13.0
7-9.5	195	9.9	374	19.1
10-12.5	493	25.2	474	24.2
13-15.5	981	50.1	603	30.8
16-above	66	3.3	34	1.7
0	-	-	92	4.7
Total	1960	100	1960	100

TABLE 2

CREDITS FOR WINTER '75

No. Credits	Attempted No.	Attempted %	Completed No.	Completed %
1-3.5	99	5.1	176	9.0
4-6.5	157	8.0	258	13.2
7-9.5	163	8.3	327	16.7
10-12.5	667	34.0	369	18.8
13-15.5	828	42.2	321	16.4
16-above	46	2.4	29	1.5
0	-	-	48	24.4
Total	1960	100	1960	100

TABLE 3

GRADE POINT AVERAGE BY SEMESTER

GPA RANGE	Fall '74 No.	Fall '74 %	Winter '75 No.	Winter '75 %
.02-1.50	259	13.2	222	11.3
1.51-2.00	316	16.1	287	14.6
2.01-2.50	204	10.4	170	8.7
2.51-3.00	413	21.1	317	16.2
3.01-3.50	206	10.5	129	6.6
3.51-4.00	296	15.1	206	10.5
0	265	13.5	629	32.1
Total	1960	99.9	1960	100.0

Grade point average decreased for the winter semester in every range but more than doubled for students with zero gpa. This means that either these students were "no shows," failed all 100 level courses, were registered for both developmental and 100 level courses but did not receive a grade for the 100 level courses or were registered for all developmental courses. The combination of these four possibilities would account for the high percentage for this category as shown in Table 3. The mean grade point average for the fall semester was 2.3 and 1.7 for the winter semester.

TABLE 4

CURRICULUM CODES BY MAJOR CATEGORIES

College Major Program	Fall '74 #	Fall '74 %	Fall '75 #	Fall '75 %	Change from 74-75 #	Change from 74-75 %
Transfer	390	17.3	436	22.2	+46	+11.8
Career	411	18.2	531	27.1	+120	+29.2
Certificate	0	-	13	.7	+13	+100.0
Guided Studies	187	8.3	229	11.7	+41	+21.8
Non-Matriculated Intent on Degree	628	27.9	258	13.2	-370	-58.9
Guided and Special	97	4.3	2	.1	-95	-97.9
Undecided	540	24.0	482	24.6	-58	-10.7
Other	-	-	9	.5	+9	+100.0
	2253	100.0	1960	100.1		

Table 4 is particularly significant because it shows that freshmen not only change majors within the first year of college, but that the change for our population is in a particular direction. Notice the last four categories lost enrollment in the exact proportion to the increase in transfer, career and certificate programs. It had also been assumed that our non-matriculated students did not become matriculated until they were close to graduating, but these data show differently.

Grade Summary

Students in Health Technology did comparatively well: they had the highest percentage of A's for both semesters; 34.9% earned B's for the winter semester. It should be noted, however, that D's are

discouraged in the program.

History, philosophy and religion enrolled the third largest number of students, but for the winter, more students received D's, F's, I's and W's in relation to the fall semester than for any other department. In fact, there were approximately three times fewer B's for the winter than there were for the fall; there was an approximate 20% increase in F's for the winter, and withdrawals more than doubled for the winter semester.

Student performance in Information Processing seems to have remained relatively traditional for Essex: there is a general tendency for students to have earned higher grades in the fall than in the winter. More students withdrew in the winter than they did in the fall and no grades received increased somewhat in the winter.

Enrollment in Languages and Literature decreased by 49.45% in the winter semester; and, as the higher grades (A,B,C) decreased, D's, F's, I's, W's and no grade received increased. Approximately 50% of the students who were enrolled in English 101 in the fall were not registered for English 102 for the winter semester; and, of those attempting English 102, 43.02% either failed it or received no grade at all for the course.

Student performance in Biological Science appears to have been about the same for both semesters. There was an increase in withdrawals for the winter semester, but there was a corresponding decrease in the number of no grades received.

Chemistry, Physics and Engineering was about the same as Biological Science. The only noticeable exceptions were an increase in C's and F's for the winter semester.

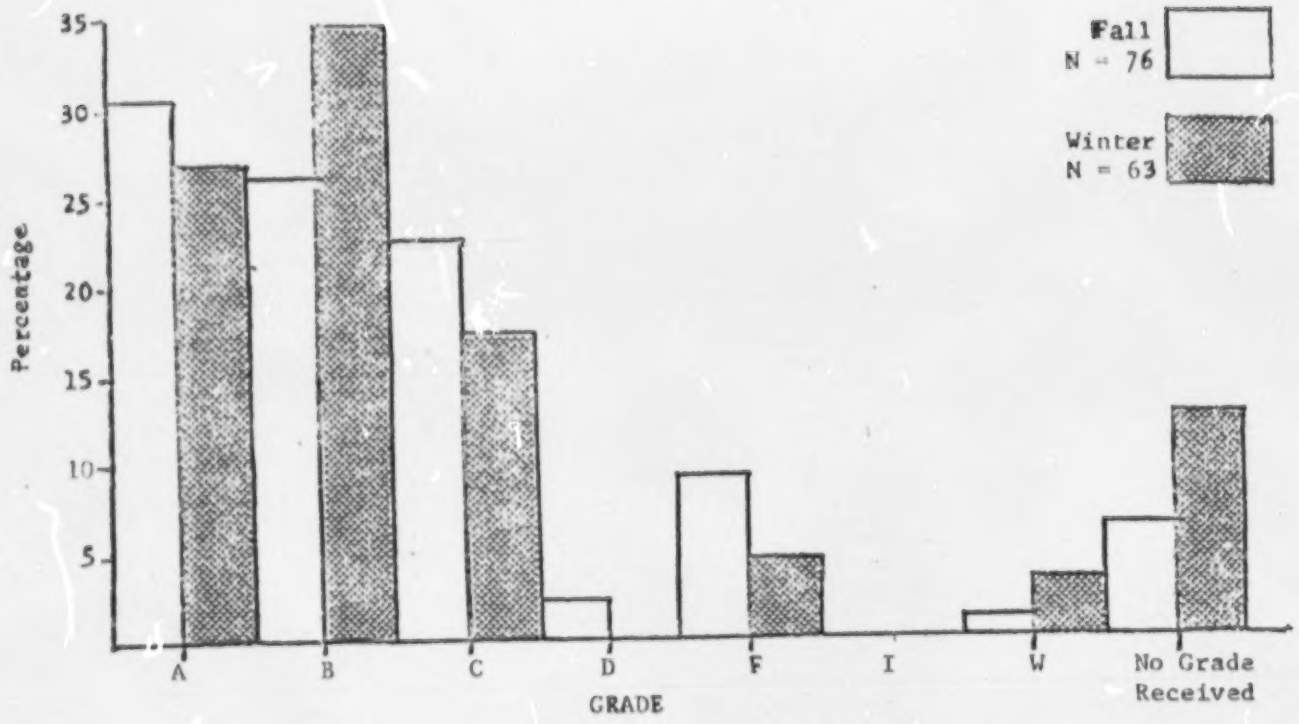
Grades for Accounting, Business Administration and Economics were somewhat stable for the two semesters. On the high side, students earned the second highest percentage of A's (Health Technology was no. 1) for the fall semester with 24.2%. There were fewer failures (F's) for the winter as well.

Overall, performance was the best in Behavioral Science where approximately 65% of the students registered for psychology 101 earned a grade of "C" or better, and 60% earned "C" or better in Sociology 101. Twenty-eight point seven percent earned B's in the department for the fall; and in spite of the increase in enrollment for the winter, grade distribution did not vary to any noticeable degree.

The population performed poorest in mathematics particularly in Math 081: 46.03% of the students registered for the course in the fall were not registered for Math 091 for the winter. The failure rate for all courses was approximately equal to the rate for passing grades and approximately 20% of the students withdrew for the winter semester.

Students in Education and Physical Education and Fine and Performing Arts performed about the same. There was slightly more variation in the former but not very much. Both departments enrolled about an equal number of students.

HEALTH TECHNOLOGY



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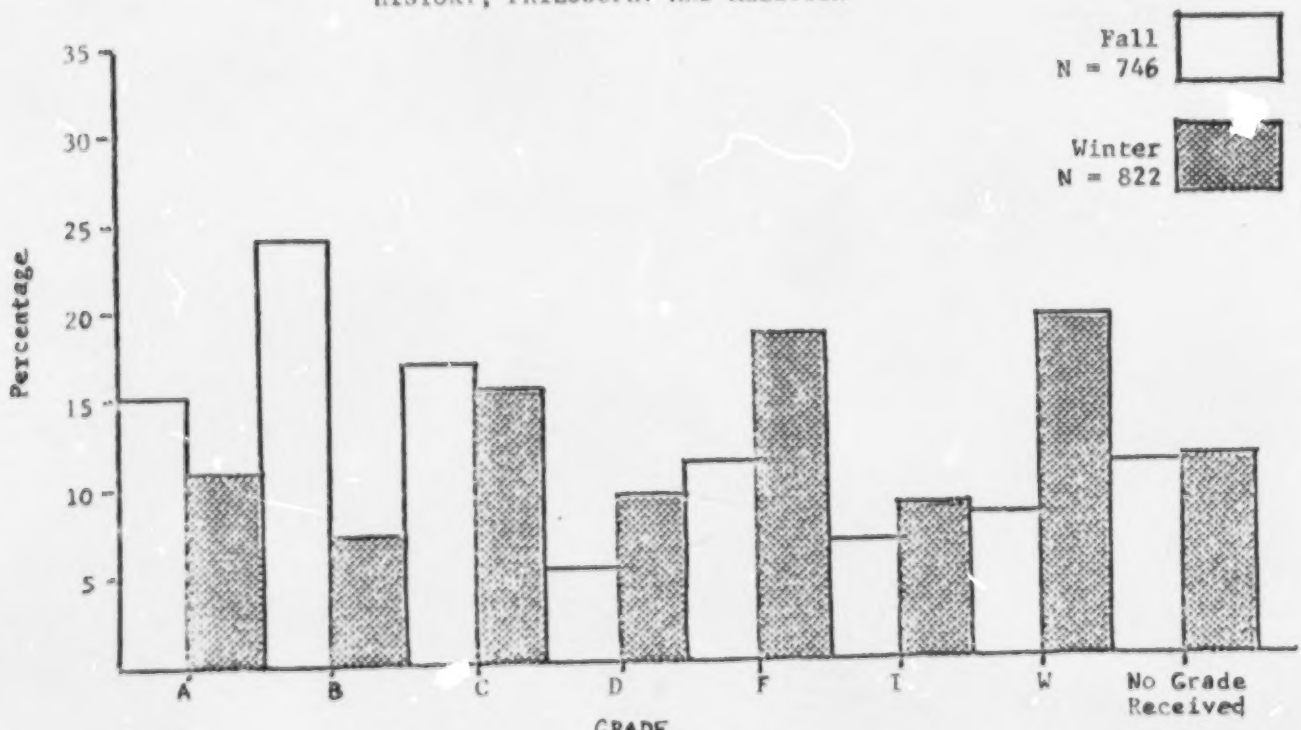

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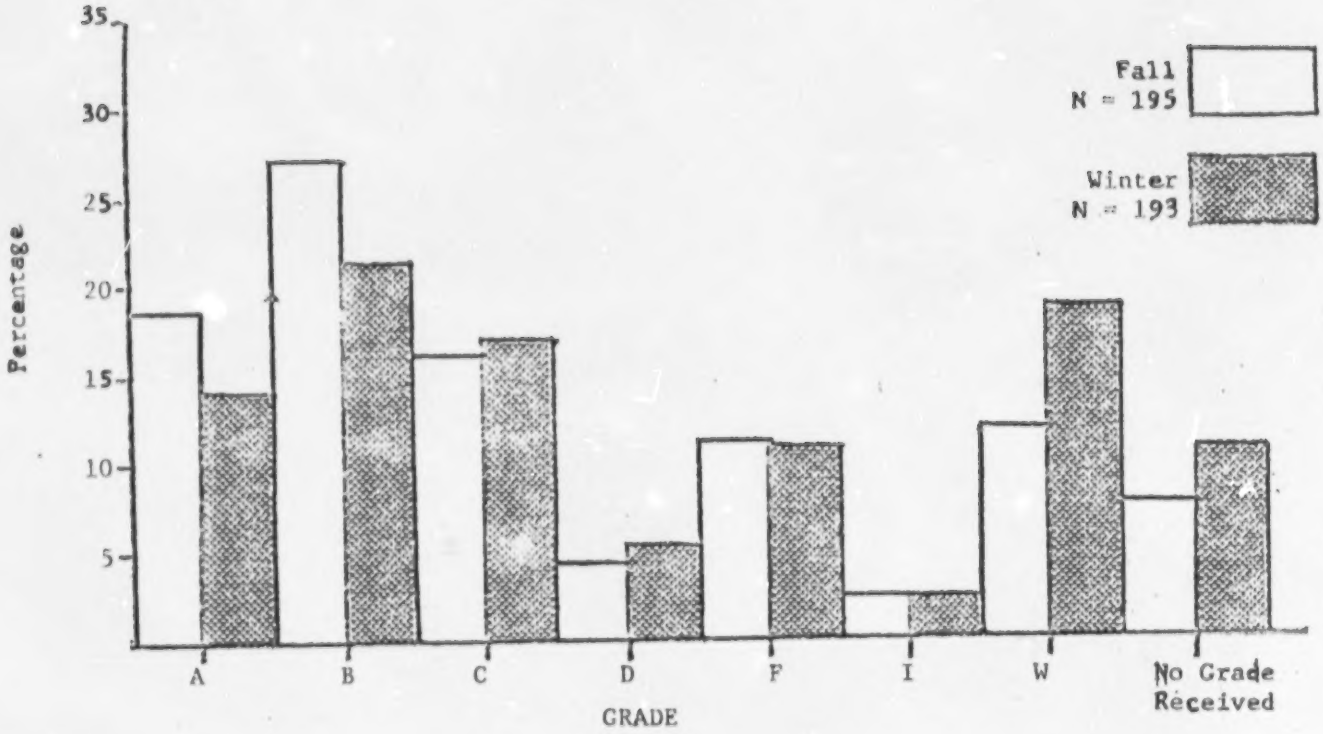

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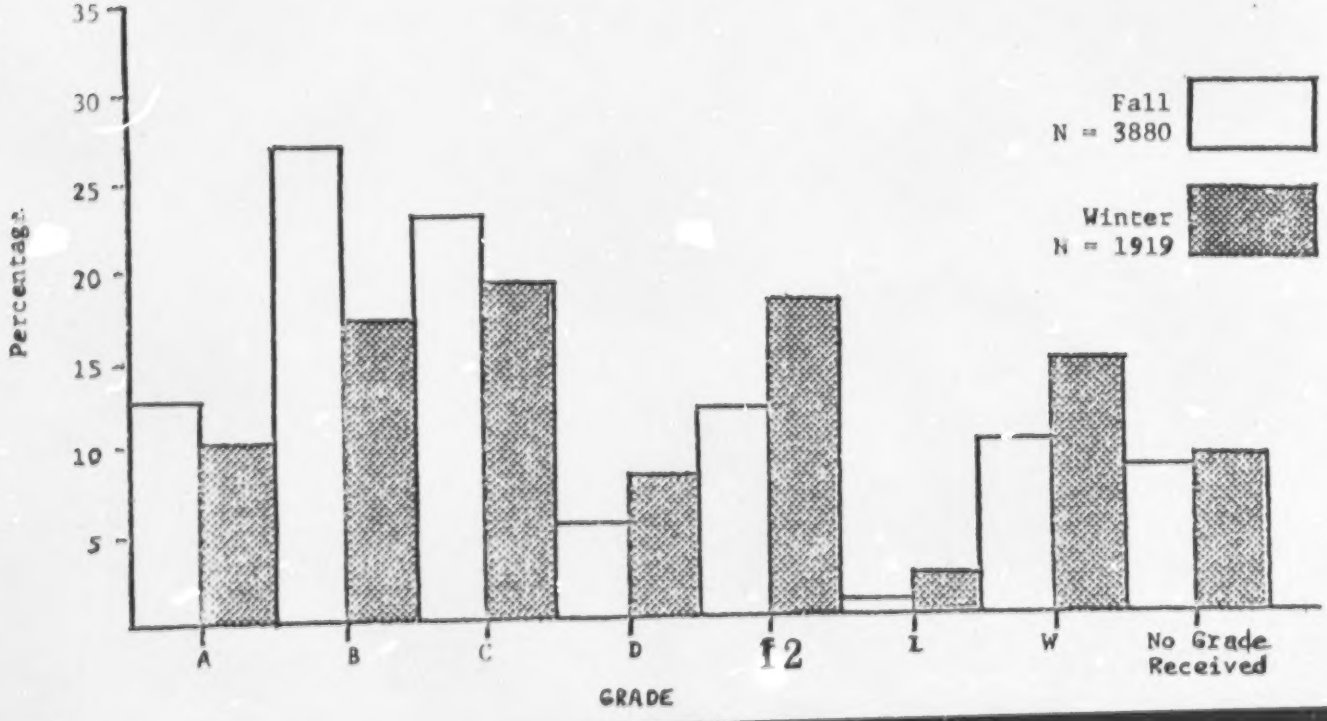

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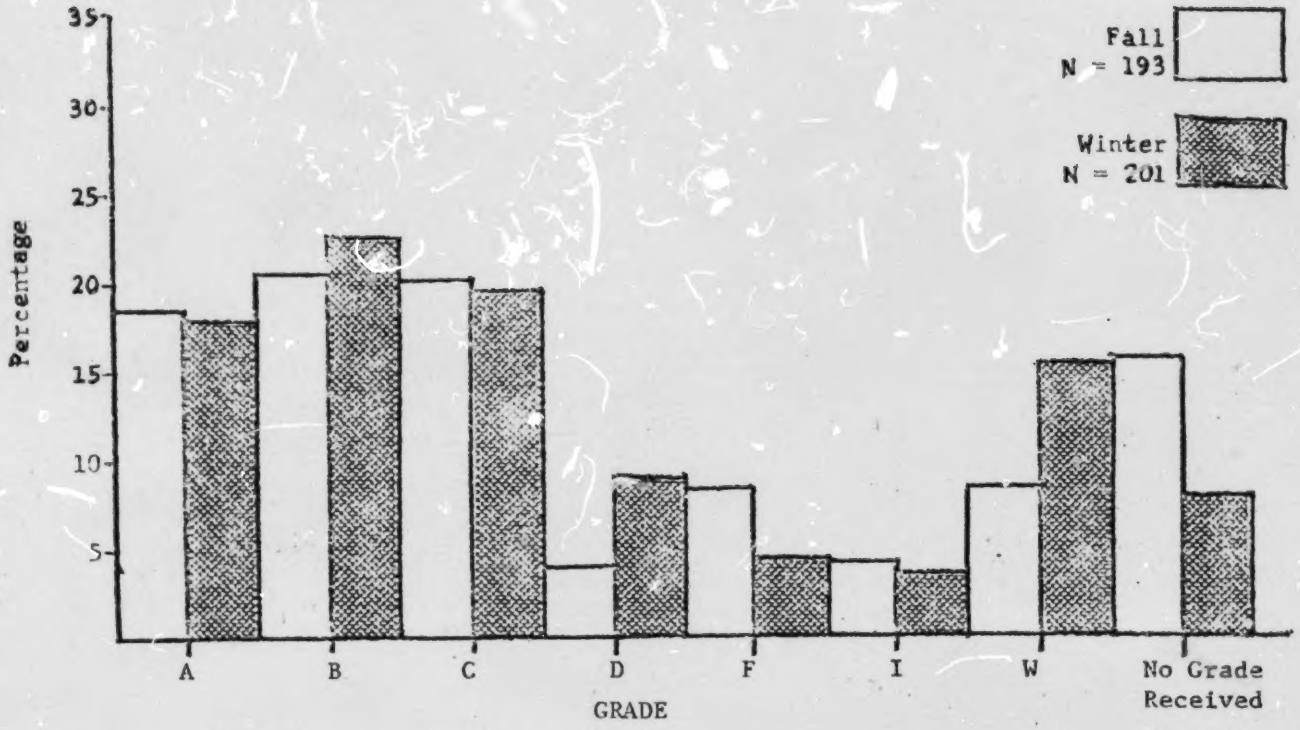

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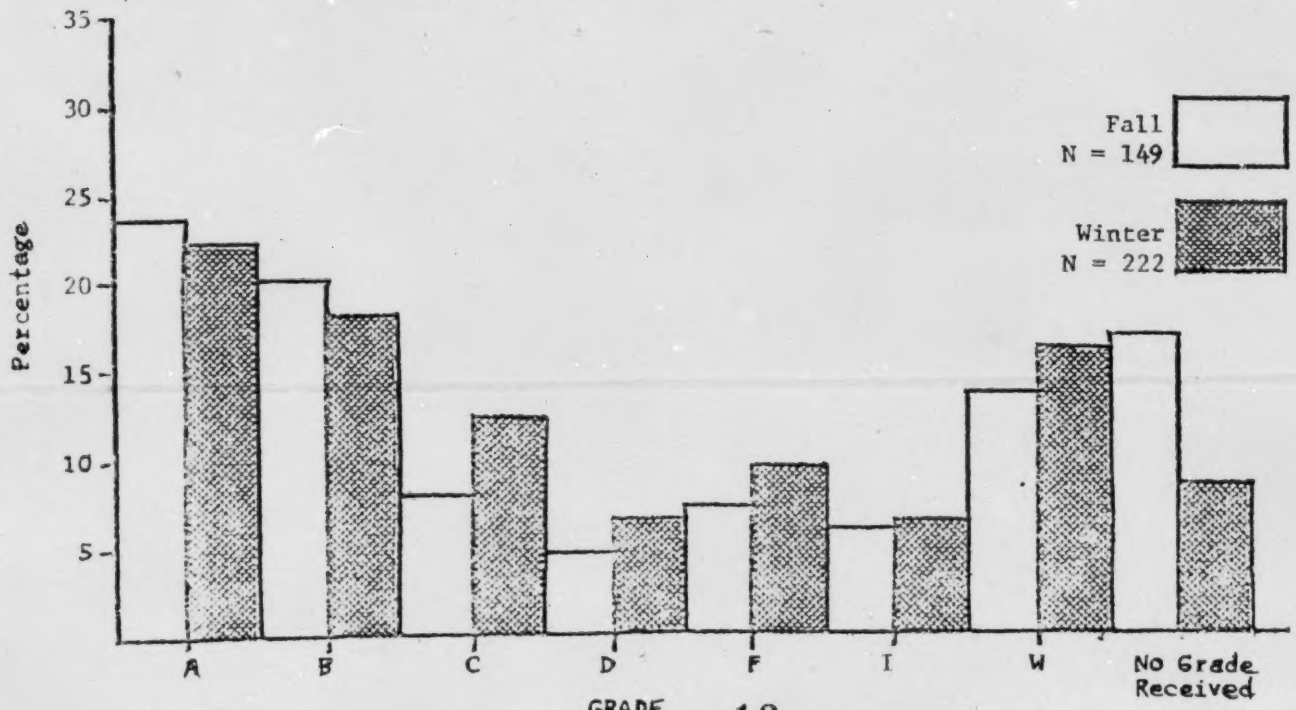
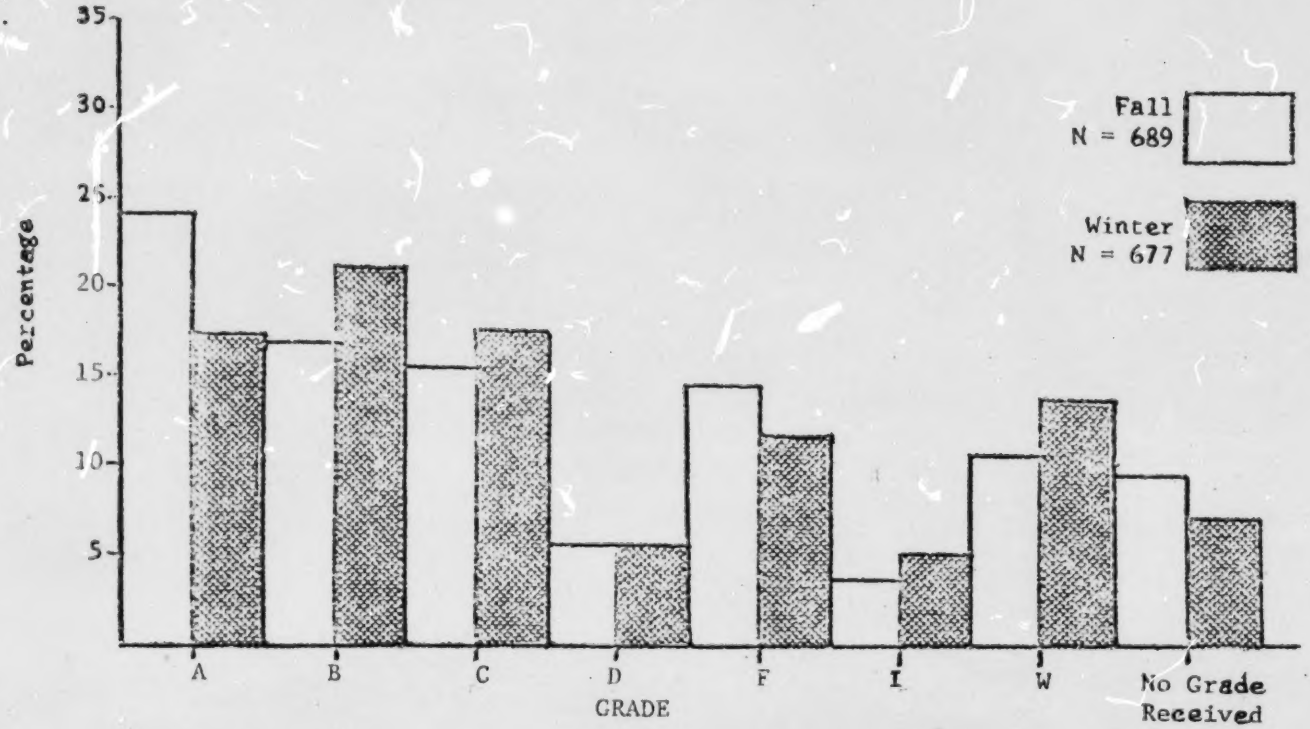


ACCOUNTING, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMICS



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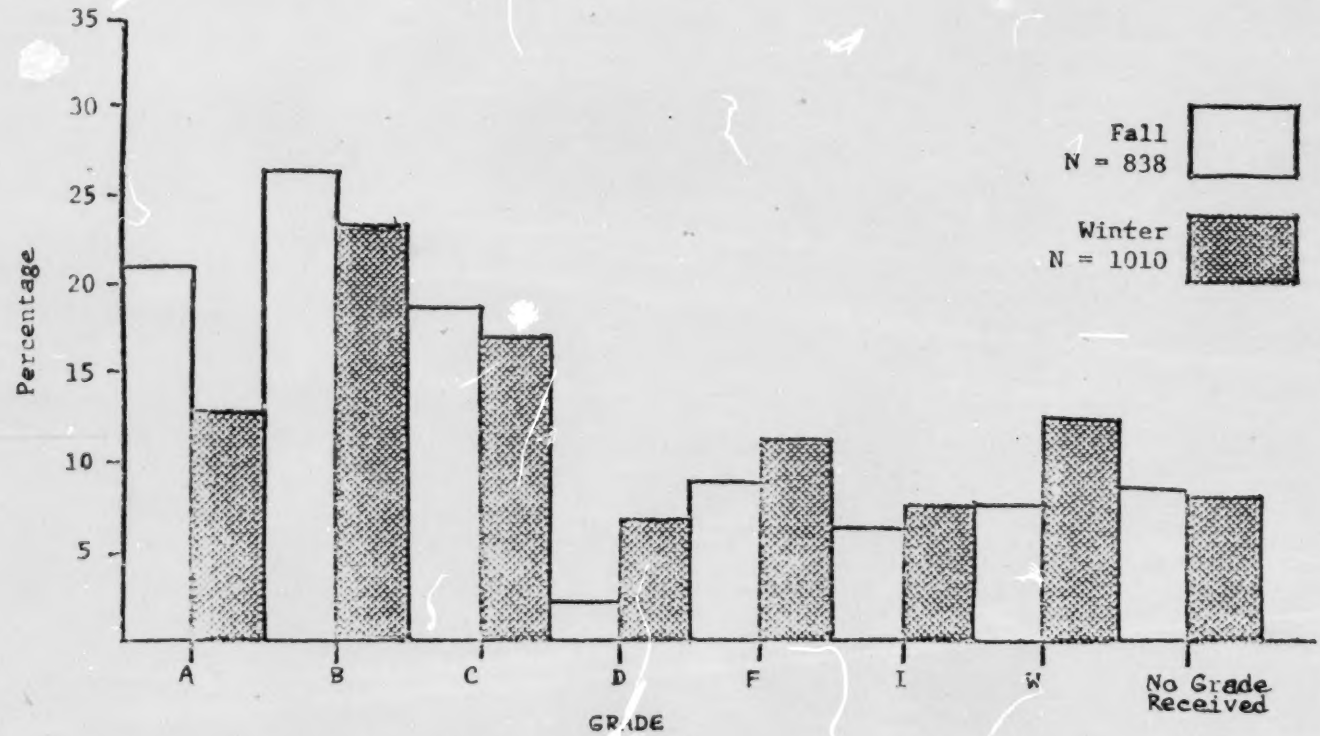

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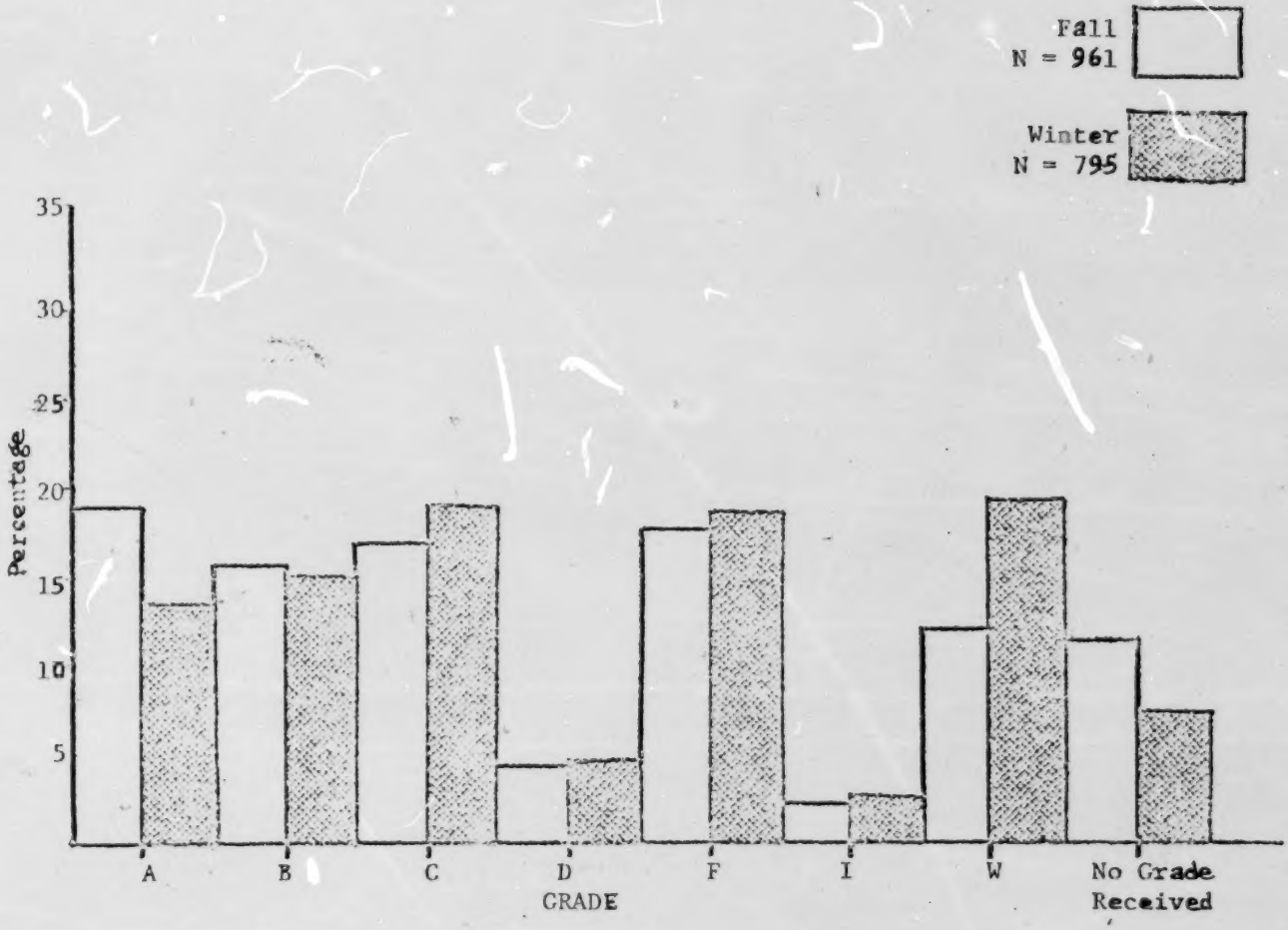
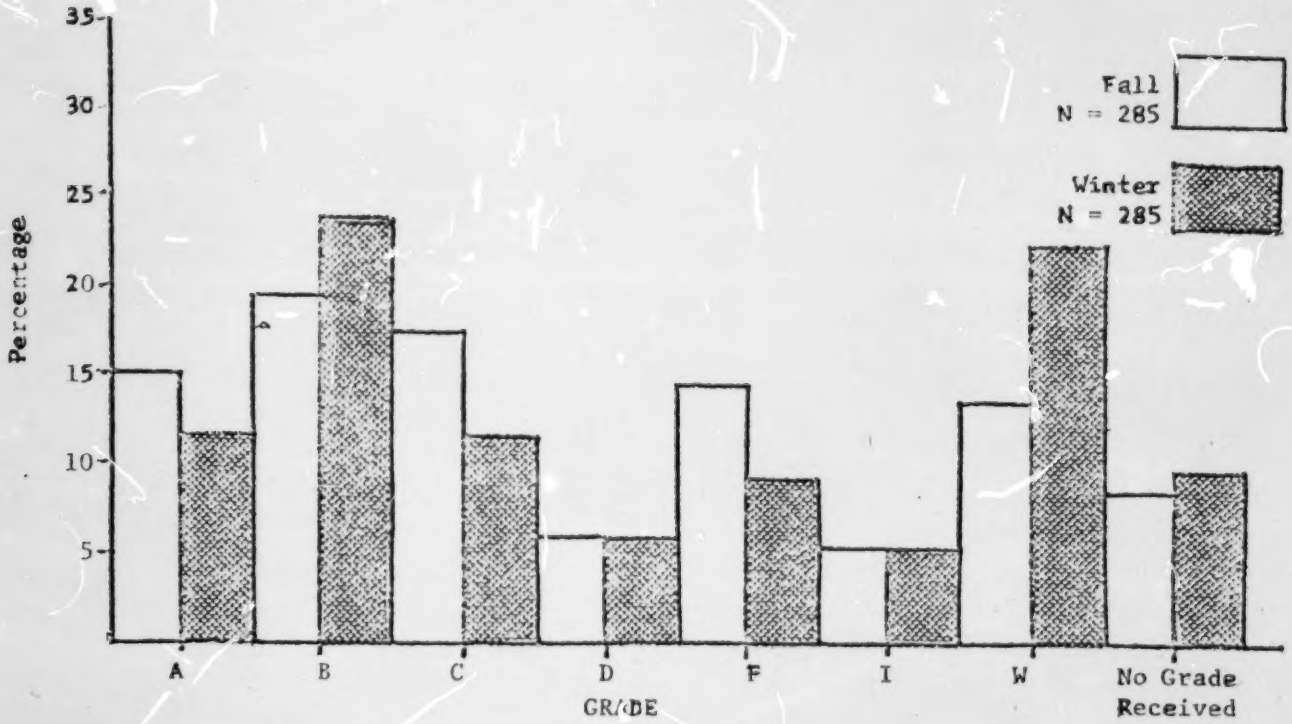
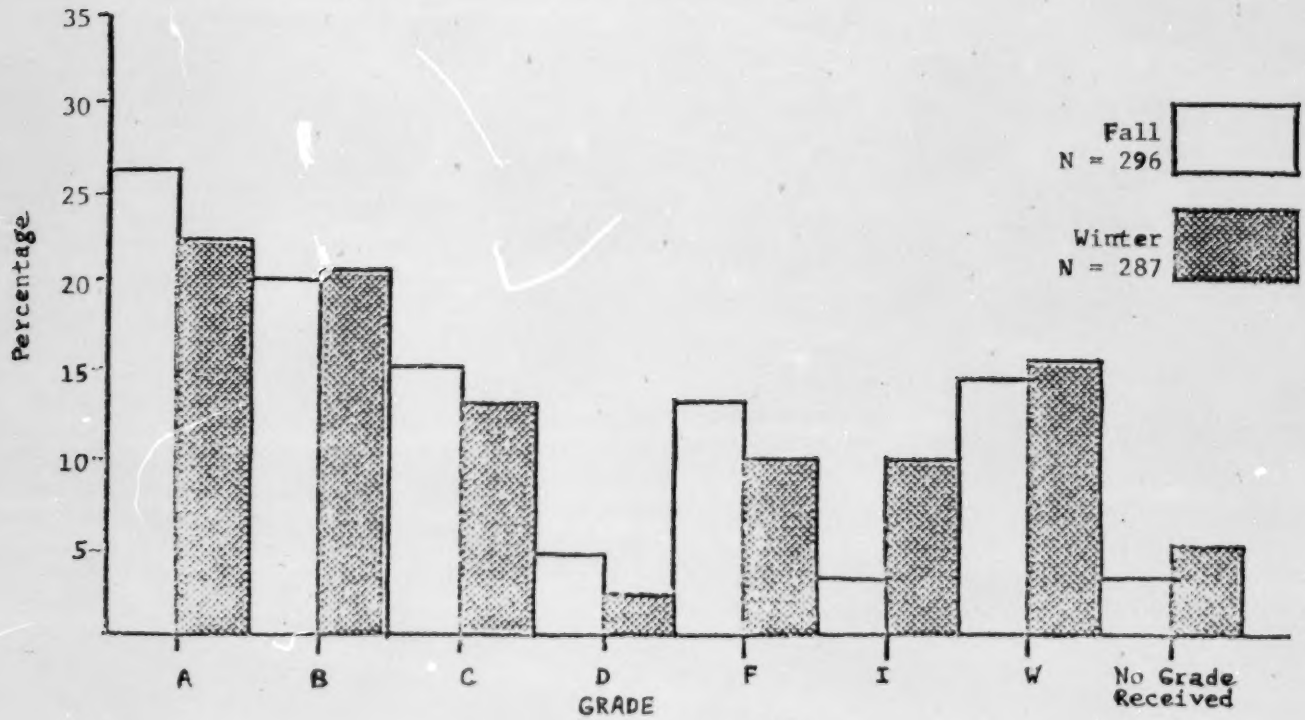


EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION



FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS



Summary of General Findings

In terms of numbers, the typical student registered for a combination of the following courses:

Fall	Winter
ENG 091/101	ENG 102
MTH 081	MTH 091
RDG 081	RDG 082
HST 101	HST 102
PSY 101	PSY 101
SOC 101	SOC 101

Seventy-two point four percent of the population registered for 12 credits or more; 27.6% registered for fewer than 12 credits.

The ratio of male to female remained approximately the same after one year in the college: 38% male to 62% female.

The t-test calculated for credits attempted and credits completed by semester showed no significant difference. For the fall and winter respectively, $t = 1.65$ and 2.10.

More A's were earned in the fall than were earned in the winter semester.

Incompletes were approximately the same for all departments for both semesters. The exceptions were Fine and Performing Arts that showed twice as many I's for the winter semester for the fall.

Students in all departments withdrew more frequently in the winter than they did in the fall and the proportion by department is about the same except for math.

Discussion

The failure rate for the population would appear to confirm the incongruity between high motivation and low academic performance, but the problem is not as simple as it seems to be. For instance, there is considerable discrepancy in failures and no grades earned among departments. A major obstacle is the fact that most of the grades for the population are concentrated at the extremes: students either received A's or B's on the one hand or F's, I's, W's or no grade received on the other. Without exception, fewer students received C's than B's which would seem to suggest that many of the students were high achievers.

Though the data are not sufficient to answer the question as to whether or not we are perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy, they do suggest that some discussion of academic standards may be in order. That is, we used to hear a good deal about setting and maintaining high standards in higher education. High standards were interpreted as being very difficult to reach and were accompanied by a high rate of failure--only the most able students reached the goal.

The literature of present-day reinforcement theory suggests that academic standards are high or low depending upon the amount of change they demand on the part of the student: if the student's behavior is changed very little in reaching a goal, a high standard has not been attained within the learning experience. Second, standards are usually measured by the distance the students must go to reach them. A third measure of standards is the extent of refinement of behavior demanded.

The issue that seems to be implied by the data is the relationship between student performance as measured by grades received and ability assessed by the CGP.

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